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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 001006

SIPDIS

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FOR NEA/ARP, G/TIP, AND INL/HSTC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/27/2027
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [AE](#) [KU](#) [TIP](#)
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER TAKES INTEREST IN EMBASSY
ENGAGEMENT WITH SALAFIS ON TIP

REF: KUWAIT 938

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (SBU) At a June 26 meeting with the Ambassador, Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah inquired about why Kuwait had been listed lower than the United Arab Emirates on the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report. Ambassador said that he did not know, but the UAE had apparently taken some limited concrete actions toward addressing the issue while Kuwait had made only promises. Ambassador said that more effective efforts on prosecution of traffickers and provision of shelter for foreign laborers who were abused would go a long way toward improving Kuwait's standing.

12. (SBU) The Foreign Minister expressed surprise that the Embassy had agreed to participate later that day in a public debate on the TIP report given that the other participants were Salafis (fundamentalist Islamists) who frequently make harsh public criticisms of the U.S. on a variety of issues. The Ambassador responded that it was important to discuss the report and that this was an opportunity to explain the TIP process and to rebut some of the inaccurate criticisms that have appeared in the press.

13. (C) The evening of June 26, Poloff and five of the leading Salafis in Kuwait gathered at a diwaniyya to speak to several dozen conservative Islamist attendees about the report. The event went surprisingly well. The Salafi speakers all acknowledged that the report highlighted a serious problem in Kuwait, though they directed mild criticism at the report for exaggerating the scope of the problem and for its "interference" in Kuwait's affairs. Former MP Fahd Al-Khanna ridiculed those Kuwaitis who sought to discredit the report by citing Guantanamo and other perceived violations of human rights by the USG. He called such criticisms "illogical" since these are separate issues. He said it was important to look at the report objectively on its own merits and not hide from the fact that Kuwait must do more to protect foreign workers. (Comment: Salafis are among the few Kuwaitis who regularly criticize the situation of foreign workers. They thus constitute an unlikely ally on TIP issues. End Comment.)

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LeBaron